

Apparition of the Blessed Virgin on the Mountain of La Salette

Don Bosco presents a detailed account of the "Apparition of the Blessed Virgin on the mountain of La Salette," which occurred on 19 September 1846, based on official documents and the testimonies of the visionaries. He reconstructs the historical and geographical context – two young shepherds, Maximin and Mélanie, in the heights of the Alps – the miraculous encounter with the Virgin, her warning message against sin, and the promise of graces and providences, as well as the supernatural signs that accompanied these demonstrations. He recounts the spread of the devotion, its spiritual influence on the inhabitants and the whole world, and the secret revealed only to Pius IX to strengthen the faith of Christians and testify to the perpetual presence of miracles in the Church.

Author's Protest

In obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII, I protest that regarding what is said in this book about miracles, revelations, or other events, I do not intend to attribute any authority other than human; and in bestowing the title of Saint or Blessed upon anyone, I do so only according to opinion, excepting those things and persons already approved by the Holy Apostolic See.

To the Reader

A certain and marvellous fact, attested by thousands of people and which all may still verify today, is the apparition of the Blessed Virgin, which occurred on 19 September 1846. (On this extraordinary event, many pamphlets and several newspapers printed at the time may be consulted, notably: "Account of the Apparition of Mary Most Holy," Turin,

1847; "Official Decree on the Apparition," etc., 1848; the booklet printed under the care of Fr. Giuseppe Gonfalonieri, Novara, Enrico Grotti.)

Our merciful Mother appeared in the form and figure of a great Lady to two shepherds – a boy of 11 years and a peasant girl of 15 – on a mountain in the Alps situated in the parish of La Salette in France. She appeared not only for the good of France, as the Bishop of Grenoble states, but for the good of the whole world, to warn us of the great wrath of her Divine Son, kindled especially by three sins: **blasphemy, the profanation of Sundays, and eating meat on forbidden days.**

Other miraculous events follow, gathered from public documents or attested by persons whose faith excludes all doubt about what they report.

May these facts confirm the good in religion and refute those who, perhaps out of ignorance, would limit the power and mercy of the Lord by saying: "It is no longer the time of miracles." Jesus said that greater miracles would be performed in His Church than those He Himself worked, and He set neither time nor number. Therefore, as long as the Church exists, we shall always see the hand of the Lord manifesting His power through wondrous events, because yesterday, today, and always, Christ will be the one who governs and assists His Church until the end of time.

But these visible signs of Divine Omnipotence are always harbingers of grave events that reveal the mercy and goodness of the Lord or His justice and indignation, yet in such a way as to bring greater glory to Him and greater benefit to souls. Let us ensure they are for us a source of graces and blessings, an encouragement to a living faith, active faith, faith that moves us to do good and flee evil, making us worthy of His infinite mercy in time and eternity.

Apparition of the Blessed Virgin on the Mountains of La Salette

Maximin, son of Pierre Giraud, a carpenter from the village of Corps, was an 11-year-old boy. Françoise

Mélanie, daughter of poor parents, also from Corps, was a 15-year-old girl. There was nothing remarkable about them: both were ignorant and rough, both tending cattle in the mountains. Maximin knew only the Our Father and Hail Mary; Mélanie knew little more, so much so that, due to her ignorance, she had not yet been admitted to Holy Communion.

Sent by their parents to tend cattle in the pastures, it was purely by chance that on 18 September, the eve of the great event, they met on the mountain while watering their cows at a spring.

That evening, returning home with the cattle, Mélanie said to Maximin: "Who will be the first to reach the mountain tomorrow?" And the next day, 19 September, a Saturday, they ascended together, each leading four cows and a goat. The day was fine and clear, the sun bright. Around noon, hearing the *Angelus* bell, they made a short prayer with the sign of the Cross; then they took their provisions and ate by a small spring to the left of a stream. After eating, they crossed the stream, left their bags by a dry fountain, descended a little further, and fell asleep some distance apart, which was not usual for them.

Now let us hear the account from the shepherds themselves, as they gave it that evening to the owners and later thousands of times to thousands of people.

"We had fallen asleep..." recounts Mélanie. "I woke first and, not seeing my cows, woke Maximin, saying, 'Come, let's find our cows.' We crossed the stream, climbed a little, and saw them lying on the opposite side. They were not far. Then I went back down, and five or six steps before reaching the stream, I saw a brightness like the sun but more brilliant, though not the same colour, and said to Maximin, 'Come, come quickly and see this light below.' (It was between two and three in the afternoon.)

Maximin came down at once, asking: 'Where is this light?' I pointed to the small spring with my finger, and he stopped when he saw it. Then we saw a Lady in the midst of the light;

she was seated on a pile of stones, her face in her hands. In fear, I dropped my stick. Maximin said: 'Hold your stick; if she does anything to us, I'll give her a good beating.'

Then the Lady rose, crossed her arms, and said, 'Come near, my children. Do not be afraid; I am here to give you great news.' We crossed the stream, and she advanced to where we had slept. She stood between us, weeping all the while she spoke (I saw her tears clearly). 'If my people will not submit, I am forced to let go of the hand of my Son. It is so strong, so heavy, I can no longer restrain it.'

'How long I have suffered for you! If I wish my Son not to abandon you, I must pray to Him unceasingly; yet you take no heed. However much you pray or do, you can never repay the care I have taken for you.'

'I gave you six days to work; I reserved the seventh, and you will not grant it to me. This is what makes my Son's hand so heavy.'

'If the potatoes spoil, it is all your fault. I showed you last year (1845), yet you paid no heed, and finding spoiled potatoes, you blasphemed, mingling my Son's name with it.'

'They will continue to spoil, and by Christmas this year (1846), you will have none left.'

'If you have wheat, do not sow it; what you sow will be eaten by worms, and what grows will turn to dust when you thresh it.'

'A great famine will come.' (Indeed, a great famine occurred in France, with crowds of starving beggars flocking to cities by the thousands. While grain prices rose in Italy in early 1847, France suffered severe hunger throughout the winter of 1846–47. But the true scarcity of food, the real famine, was felt during the disasters of the 1870–71 war. In Paris, a grand personage hosted a lavish meal of meat on Good Friday. Months later, even the wealthiest citizens were reduced to eating vile food and the flesh of unclean animals. Many died of hunger.)

'Before the famine, children under seven will tremble and die in the arms of those holding them. Others will do penance for the famine.'

'The walnuts will spoil, and the grapes will rot...' (In 1849, walnuts spoiled everywhere, and grapes were ruined for over twenty years across Europe due to cryptogamic disease from 1849 to 1869.)

'If they convert, stones and rocks will turn into heaps of grain, and potatoes will spring from the earth.'

Then she said:

'Do you say your prayers well, my children?'

We both replied: 'Not very well, Lady.'

'Ah, my children, you must say them well morning and evening. When you have no time, say at least an Our Father and Hail Mary; when you have time, say more.'

'Only a few old women go to Mass; the others work all summer on Sundays. In winter, the young, when idle, go to Mass only to mock religion. In Lent, they go to the butchers like dogs.'

Then she asked: 'Have you seen spoiled wheat, my boy?'

Maximin answered: 'Oh no, Lady.' Unsure whom she addressed, I whispered,

'No, Lady, I have not seen any yet.'

'You must have seen some, my boy' (turning to Maximin). 'Once near the Coin area with your father. The field's owner told your father to see his spoiled wheat; you both went. You took some ears in your hands, and rubbing them, they turned to dust, and you returned. Half an hour from Corps, your father gave you bread, saying: 'Take, my son, eat bread this year; I know not who will eat it next if the wheat keeps spoiling.'

Maximin replied: 'Oh yes, Lady, now I remember; I had forgotten.'

Then the Lady said: 'Well, my children, you will make this known to all my people.'

She crossed the stream and, without turning, repeated: 'Well, my children, you will make this known to all my people.'

She then climbed about fifteen steps to where we had gone to

find our cows, walking on the grass without touching it, her feet barely grazing the tips. We followed; I passed before her, Maximin slightly on the side. The beautiful Lady rose (Mélanie gestured, raising her hand a metre or more), hovering momentarily. She looked to Heaven, then earth; then we saw her no more—no head, arms, or feet—as if melting away, leaving only a light in the air, which then vanished.

I said to Maximin: 'Perhaps she is a great saint?' He replied: 'Had we known, we'd have asked her to take us.' I said: 'What if she were still here?' Maximin reached for the light, but it was gone. We looked carefully but saw nothing.

I said: 'She does not wish us to see where she goes.' Then we returned to our cows."

This is Mélanie's account. Asked how the Lady was dressed, she replied,

"She wore white shoes with roses around them—of all colours; yellow stockings, a yellow apron, a white dress covered in pearls, a white neckerchief edged with roses, a high cap slightly tilted with a crown of roses. She had a chain with a crucifix: on the right, pincers; on the left, a hammer; at the cross's end, another large chain hung, like the roses around her neckerchief. Her face was white, elongated; I could not look long, for she dazzled us."

Questioned separately, Maximin gave the same account without variation in substance or form, which we refrain from repeating here.

Innumerable and crafty questions were put to them, especially for two years, under interrogations lasting 5, 6, or 7 hours, aiming to confuse or trap them in contradictions. Surely no accused was ever so rigorously examined by courts of justice regarding an alleged crime.

Secret of the two little shepherds

Immediately after the apparition, Maximin and Melanie, on their way home, questioned each other about why the great Lady, after saying "the grapes will rot," had paused briefly before speaking and merely moved her lips without

making audible what she was saying?

As they discussed this between themselves, Maximin said to Melanie: "She told me something, but forbade me to tell you." They both realised they had each separately received a secret from the Lady, with the prohibition not to reveal it to others. Now consider, dear reader, whether children can keep silent.

It is incredible to recount how much was done and attempted to extract this secret from them in any way possible. It is astonishing to read of the thousands upon thousands of attempts made for this purpose by hundreds upon hundreds of people over twenty years. Prayers, surprises, threats, insults, gifts, and seductions of every kind—all came to nothing; they remained impenetrable.

The Bishop of Grenoble, an octogenarian, felt it his duty to command the two privileged children to at least convey their secret to the Holy Father, Pius IX. At the name of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the two little shepherds promptly obeyed and resolved to reveal a secret that until then nothing had been able to wrest from them. They therefore wrote it themselves (from the day of the apparition onwards, they had been sent to school, each separately); then they folded and sealed their letter—all this in the presence of distinguished persons chosen by the bishop himself to serve as witnesses. The bishop then sent two priests to deliver this mysterious dispatch to Rome.

On 18 July 1851, they presented to His Holiness Pius IX three letters: one from Monsignor Bishop of Grenoble, accrediting these two envoys; the other two contained the secret of the two young children of La Salette. Each had written and sealed the letter containing their secret in the presence of witnesses who had attested to their authenticity on the envelope.

His Holiness opened the letters and began reading Maximin's. "There is truly," he said, "the candour and simplicity of a child." During this reading, a certain emotion manifested on the Holy Father's face; his lips tightened, his cheeks

swelled. "It concerns," the Pope said to the two priests, "it concerns scourges with which France is threatened. She is not alone in guilt—Germany, Italy, all of Europe are guilty too, and deserve punishment. I greatly fear religious indifference and human respect."

Pilgrimage to La Salette

The fountain near which the Lady—that is, the Virgin Mary—had rested was, as we said, dry; and according to all the shepherds and villagers of those parts, it only gave water after heavy rains and the melting of snow. Now this fountain, dry on the very day of the apparition, began to gush the following day, and from that time the water has flowed clear and uninterrupted.

That barren, rugged, deserted mountain, inhabited by shepherds for barely four months a year, has become the stage for an immense gathering of people. Entire populations flock from all sides to this privileged mountain. Weeping with tenderness and singing hymns, they bow their foreheads to this blessed ground where Mary's voice resounded. They are seen kissing reverently the spot sanctified by Mary's feet, and they descend filled with joy, trust, and gratitude.

Every day, an immense number of faithful devoutly visit the site of the miracle. On the first anniversary of the apparition (19 September 1847), over seventy thousand pilgrims of every age, sex, condition, and even nation covered the surface of that land...

But what makes the power of that voice from Heaven felt even more is the remarkable change in morals among the inhabitants of Corps, La Salette, the entire canton, and all the surrounding areas—and it spreads still further afield... They have ceased working on Sundays; they have abandoned blasphemy... They attend church, heed their pastors' voices, receive the sacraments, and fulfil the Easter duty with edification—until then generally neglected. I omit the many striking conversions and extraordinary graces in the spiritual order.

On the site of the apparition now stands a majestic church with extensive buildings, where travellers, after satisfying their devotion, can comfortably refresh themselves and even spend the night if they wish.

After the event of La Salette, Melanie was sent to school, making marvellous progress in knowledge and virtue. But she always felt so inflamed with devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she resolved to consecrate herself entirely to Her. She entered the Discalced Carmelites, among whom, according to the journal *Echo de Fourvière* (22 October 1870), she was called to Heaven by the Holy Virgin. Shortly before her death, she wrote the following letter to her mother.

11 September 1870.

Dearest and most beloved mother,

May Jesus be loved by all hearts. This letter is not only for you but for all the inhabitants of my dear village of Corps. A family father, most loving towards his children, seeing that they forgot their duties, despised the law imposed on them by God, and became ungrateful, resolved to punish them severely. The spouse of the Father of the family begged for mercy and at the same time went to the two youngest children of the Father—the weakest and most ignorant. The spouse, who cannot weep in her spouse's house (Heaven), finds abundant tears in the fields of these wretched children. She expresses her fears and threats if they do not turn back, if they do not observe the Master's law. A very small number embrace the reform of the heart and set themselves to observe the holy law of the Father; but alas! The majority remain in sin and sink deeper into it. Then the Father sends punishments to chastise them and draw them from this state of hardness. These wretched children think to escape punishment—they seize and break the rods that strike them instead of falling to their knees, begging for mercy, and above all promising to change their lives. Finally, the Father, further angered, takes up a

stronger rod and strikes—and will strike—until He is acknowledged, until they humble themselves and beg mercy from Him who reigns on earth and in Heaven.

You understand me, dear mother and beloved inhabitants of Corps: this Father is God. We are all His children; neither you nor I have loved Him as we ought; we have not kept His commandments as we should, now God chastises us. A great number of our soldier brothers die; families and entire cities are reduced to misery; and if we do not turn to God, it is not over. Paris is very guilty for rewarding a wicked man who wrote against the divinity of Jesus Christ. Men have but one time to sin; but God is eternal and punishes sinners. God is angered by the multitude of sins and because He is almost unknown and forgotten. Now who can stop the war that does so much harm in France and will soon recommence in Italy? etc., etc. Who can halt this scourge?

We must: 1) recognise that in this war there is solely the hand of God; 2) humble ourselves and ask with mind and heart forgiveness for our sins; sincerely promise to serve God with mind and heart and obey His commandments without human respect. Some pray, asking God for the triumph of us French. No—this is not what the good God wants. He wants the conversion of the French. The Blessed Virgin came to France, and France did not convert. She is thus more guilty than other nations; if she does not humble herself, she will be greatly humbled. Paris, this hearth of vanity and pride—who can save her if fervent prayers do not rise to the heart of the good Master?

I remember, dear mother and beloved inhabitants, my dear village—I remember those devout processions you made to the sacred mountain of La Salette so God's wrath would not strike your land! The Holy Virgin heard your fervent prayers, your penances, and all you did for love of God. I think and hope you must now do even more—beautiful processions for France's salvation; that is, for France to return to God, for God waits

only for this to withdraw the rod with which He scourges His rebellious people. Let us pray much—yes, pray; hold your processions as you did in 1846 and '47: believe that God always hears the sincere prayers of humble hearts. Let us pray much, pray always. I never loved Napoleon, for I remember his whole life. May the divine Saviour forgive him all the evil he has done—and still does!

Let us remember we were created to love and serve God, and that outside this there is no true happiness. Mothers must raise their children Christianly, for the time of tribulations is not over. If I revealed their number and nature, you would be horrified. But I do not wish to frighten you; trust in God, who loves us infinitely more than we can love Him. Let us pray, pray—and the good, divine, tender Virgin Mary will always be with us: prayer disarms God's wrath; prayer is the key to Heaven.

Let us pray for our poor soldiers, for so many grieving mothers who have lost their children; let us consecrate ourselves to our good Heavenly Mother; pray for the blind who do not see it is God's hand now striking France. Pray much and do penance. Hold fast to the Holy Church and our Holy Father, her visible head and the Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ on earth. In your processions and penances, pray much for him. Lastly, remain at peace, love one another as brothers, promising God to keep His commandments—and truly keep them. And by God's mercy, you will be happy and die a good and holy death, which I desire for all, placing you under the protection of the august Virgin Mary. I embrace you heartily (relatives). My health is in the Cross. The Heart of Jesus watches over me.

Maria of the Cross, victim of Jesus

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The Syndrome of Philip and the Syndrome of Andrew

In the Gospel account of John, chapter 6, verses 4-14, which recounts the multiplication of the loaves, there are certain details that I dwell on at length whenever I meditate on or comment on this passage.

It all begins when, faced with the 'large' hungry crowd, Jesus invites His disciples to take responsibility for feeding them. The details I refer to are, first, when Philip says it is impossible to answer this call due to the sheer number of people present. Andrew, on the other hand, points out that "there is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish," only to dismiss the possibility with a simple remark, "but what are these for so many?" (v.9).

I simply wish to share with you, dear readers, how we Christians—who are called to share the joy of our faith—can sometimes, unknowingly, be affected by either Philip's syndrome or Andrew's syndrome. At times, perhaps, even by both!

In the life of the Church, as well as in the life of the Salesian Congregation and Family, challenges are never lacking and never will be. Ours is not a call to form a group where people merely seek to be comfortable, without disturbing, and without being disturbed. It is not an experience of pre-packaged certainties. Belonging to the body of Christ must not distract us or remove us from the reality of the world as it is. On the contrary, it urges us to be fully engaged in the

events of human history. This means first and foremost, looking at reality not only with human eyes but also, and above all, with the eyes of Jesus. We are called to respond guided by love, which finds its source in the heart of Jesus—that is, to live for others as Jesus teaches us and shows us.

Philip's Syndrome

Philip's syndrome is subtle, and for this reason, it is also very dangerous. His analysis is correct and accurate. His response to Jesus' invitation is not wrong. His reasoning follows a very straightforward and flawless human logic. He looked at reality with his human eyes, with a rational mind, and concluded that it was unfeasible. Faced with this "calculated" approach, the hungry person ceases to concern me—the problem is theirs, not mine. To be more precise in light of our daily experiences, the refugee could have stayed home; they shouldn't bother me. The poor and the sick must deal with their own issues, and it's not my place to be part of their problem, much less to find them a solution. This is Philip's syndrome. He is a follower of Jesus, yet his way of seeing and interpreting reality remains stagnant, unchallenged, light-years away from that of his Master.

Andrew's Syndrome

Then there is Andrew's syndrome. I wouldn't say it's worse than Philip's, but it comes close to being more tragic. It is a subtle and cynical syndrome; it sees some possible opportunity but doesn't go further. There is a tiny glimmer of hope, but humanly speaking, it's unworkable. So, both the gift and the giver are disqualified. And the giver, who in this case has the 'misfortune' of being a boy, is simply willing to share what he has!

These two syndromes are still with us today, in the Church and even among us pastors and educators. Crushing a small hope is easier than making room for God's surprise—a surprise that can make even the smallest hope blossom. Allowing ourselves to be

conditioned by dominant clichés, avoiding opportunities that challenge reductive interpretations, is a constant temptation. If we're not careful, we become prophets and executors of our own downfall. By stubbornly clinging to a human logic—'academically' refined and 'intellectually' qualified—the space for an evangelical reading becomes increasingly limited and eventually disappears.

When this human and horizontal logic is challenged, one of the defensive reactions it provokes is that of 'ridicule.' Those who dare to defy human logic by letting in the fresh air of the Gospel will be mocked, attacked, and ridiculed. When this happens, strangely enough, we can say we are on a prophetic path. The waters are stirring.

Jesus and the Two Syndromes

Jesus overcomes both syndromes by "taking" the loaves, which were considered too few and therefore irrelevant. He opens the door to that prophetic and faithful space we are called to inhabit. Faced with the crowd, we cannot settle for self-referential readings and interpretations. Following Jesus means going beyond human reasoning. We are called to look at challenges through His eyes. When Jesus calls us, He does not ask for solutions but for the gift of our whole selves—with all that we are and all that we have. Yet, the risk is that, faced with His call, we remain stuck, enslaved by our own thinking and clinging to what we believe we possess.

Only in generosity, grounded in abandonment to His Word, do we come to gather the abundance of Jesus' providential action. "So, they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten" (v.13). The boy's small gift bears astonishing fruit only because the two syndromes did not have the final word.

Pope Benedict XVI commented on the boy's gesture, "In the scene of the multiplication, the presence of a boy is also noted, who, faced with the difficulty of feeding so many people, shares the little he has: five loaves and two fish.

The miracle does not come from nothing, but from an initial modest sharing of what a simple boy had with him. Jesus does not ask for what we do not have, but shows us that if each one offers the little they have, the miracle can always happen anew. God can multiply our small gesture of love and make us sharers in His gift” (*Angelus*, 29 July 2012).

Faced with the pastoral challenges before us, faced with the deep thirst and hunger for spirituality that young people express, let us not be afraid, let us not cling to our own things or ways of thinking. Let us offer the little we have to Him, trusting in the light of His Word—and may this, and only this, be the enduring criterion of our choices and the guiding light of our actions.

Photo: Evangelical miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes, stained glass window at Tewkesbury Abbey in Gloucestershire (United Kingdom), an 1888 work created by Hardman & Co

“The Roman Stations”. A millenary tradition

The “Roman Stations” are an ancient liturgical tradition that, during Lent and the first week of Easter, associates each day with a specific church in Rome, within a pilgrimage journey. The term “statio” (from the Latin stare, to stop) refers to the idea of a communal pause for prayer and celebration. In past centuries, the Pope and the faithful would move in procession from the church called “collecta” to the station of the day, where the Eucharist was celebrated. This rite, while having roots in the early centuries of Christianity, retains

its vitality even today, when the indication of the station church still appears in liturgical books. It is a true pilgrimage among the basilicas and shrines of the Eternal City that can be undertaken in this jubilee year not only as a path of conversion but also as a testimony of faith.

Origin and diffusion

The origins of the Roman Stations date back at least to the 3rd Century, when the Christian community was still undergoing persecutions. The earliest testimonies refer to Pope Fabian (236-250) who would visit places of worship established near the catacombs or the burial sites of martyrs, distributing to the needy what the faithful offered as alms and celebrating the Eucharist. This custom strengthened in the 4th Century, with the freedom of worship granted by Constantine: large basilicas were built, and the faithful began to gather on specific days to celebrate Mass at sites linked to the memory of the saints. Over time, the itinerary took on a more organic character, creating a true calendar of stations that touched on the various districts of Rome. The communal dimension – with the presence of the bishop, clergy, and people – thus became a visible sign of communion and testimony of faith.

It was Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) who gave structure and regularity to the use of the Stations, especially during Lent. He established a calendar that, day by day, assigned a specific church for the main celebration. His reform did not stem from nothing, rather organized an already existing practice. Gregory wanted the procession to start from a minor church (*collecta*) and conclude in a more solemn place (*statio*), where the people, united with the Pope, celebrated the penitential rites and the Eucharist. It was a way to prepare for Easter. The very journey indicated the earthly pilgrimage towards eternity, the churches with their sacred architecture and works of art served a pedagogical function in an era when not everyone could read or access books. The relics of the martyrs preserved in those churches testified to

the faith lived to the point of giving life, and their intercession brought graces to those who requested them. The celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass sanctified the participating faithful.

During the Middle Ages, the practice of the Roman Stations spread more and more, becoming not only an ecclesial event but also a significant social phenomenon. The faithful, in fact, who came from different regions of Italy and Europe, joined the Romans to take part in these liturgical gatherings.

Structure of the station celebration

The characteristic element of these celebrations was the procession. In the morning, the faithful gathered in the church of the *collecta*, where, after a brief moment of prayer, they would set off in procession towards the station church, singing litanies and penitential hymns. Upon arrival, the Pope or the appointed prelate would preside over the Mass, with readings and prayers specific to the day. The use of litanies had a strong spiritual and pedagogical sense: while physically walking through the streets, prayers were offered for the needs of the Church and the world, invoking the saints of Rome and all of Christianity. The celebration culminated in the Eucharist, giving this “pause” a sacramental value and ecclesial communion.

Lent became the privileged time for the Stations, starting from Ash Wednesday until Holy Saturday or, according to some customs, until the second Sunday after Easter. Each day was marked by a designated church, often chosen for the presence of important relics or for its particular history. Notable examples include *Santa Sabina on the Aventine*, where the Ash Wednesday rite usually begins, and *Santa Croce in Gerusalemme*, linked to the veneration of the relics of the Cross of Christ, a traditional destination for Good Friday. Participating in the Lenten Stations means entering a daily pilgrimage that unites the faithful in a path of penance and conversion, supported by devotion to the martyrs and saints. Each church

tells a page of history, offering images, mosaics, and architectures that communicate the evangelical message in a visual form.

One of the most significant features of this tradition is the connection with the martyrs of the Church of Rome. During the period of persecutions, many Christians died for their faith. In the Constantinian and subsequent eras, basilicas or chapels were erected over their tombs. Celebrating a *statio* in these places meant recalling the testimony of those who had given their lives for Christ, reinforcing the belief that the Church is built also on the blood of the martyrs. Each liturgical visit thus became an act of communion between the faithful of yesterday and those of today, united by the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This “pilgrimage to the memory” connected the Lenten journey to a history of faith passed down from generation to generation.

From decline to rediscovery

In the Middle Ages and the following centuries, the practice of the Stations experienced alternating fortunes. Sometimes, due to epidemics, invasions, or unstable political situations, it was moderated or suspended. However, liturgical books continued to indicate the Station Churches for each day, a sign that the Church at least preserved the symbolic memory of them. With the Tridentine liturgical reform (16th century), the centrality of the Pope in such celebrations became less frequent, but the practice of citing the Station Church remained in official texts. With the renewed interest in Christian history and archaeology, the station tradition was rediscovered and proposed as a path of spiritual formation. In modern times, especially starting from Leo XIII (1878-1903) and subsequently with the popes of the 20th Century, there has been a growing interest in recovering this tradition. Various religious orders and lay associations have begun to promote the rediscovery of the “pilgrimage of the stations,” organising communal moments of prayer and catechesis in the

designated churches.

Today, in an era characterised by frenzy and speed, the *statio* proposes rediscovering the dimension of “pausing”: stopping to pray, contemplate, listen, be silent, and meet the Lord. Lent is by definition a time of conversion, of more intense prayer, and of charity towards others. Undertaking a journey among the churches of Rome, even just on some significant days, can help the faithful rediscover the meaning of a penance lived not as a renunciation in itself but as an opening to the mystery of Christ.

Even today, in the Roman Calendar, the Station Church is indicated for each day. This recalls the unity of the people of God, gathered around the successor of Peter, and the memory of the saints who have spent their lives for the Gospel. Anyone who participates in these liturgies – even occasionally – discovers a city that is not just an open-air museum but a place where faith has been expressed in an original and lasting way.

Those who wish to rediscover the profound meaning of Lent and Easter can thus allow themselves to be guided by the station itinerary, joining their voice to that of the Christians of yesterday and of today in the great chorus that leads to the Easter light.

We present below the itinerary of the Roman Stations, accompanied by the list of churches and their geographical location. It is important to note that the order of the list remains unchanged each year. Only the start date of Lent varies, and consequently, the subsequent dates. We wish a fruitful pilgrimage to those who wish to undertake, even if only in part, this journey in the Jubilee year.

			Roman Station	Saints and Martyrs with Relics or Preserved Remains
1	03.05	Wed	St. Sabina on the Aventine Hill	Saint Sabina and Saint Serapia, martyr (d. circa 126 AD); Saints Alexander, Evens and Theodulus, martyrs
2	03.06	Thurs	St. George at the Velabrum	Saint George , martyr (d. 303)
3	03.07	Fri	Sts. John and Paul on the Caelian Hill	Saints John and Paul , martyrs (d. 362); Saint Paul of the Cross (d. 1775), Founder of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ (the Passionists)
4	03.08	Sat	St. Augustine in Camp Martius	Saint Monica (d. 387), mother of Saint Augustine ; relics of Saint Augustine
5	03.09	Sun	St. John Lateran	The heads of Saint Peter and Saint Paul : these relics are preserved in silver busts placed above the papal altar, visible through a gilded grille; the Holy Stairs (in the nearby Chapel of the Sancta Sanctorum); the Last Supper Table – the table on which the Last Supper was celebrated, according to tradition (a significant relic located on the altar of the Blessed Sacrament)
6	03.10	Mon	St. Peter in Chains on the Oppian Hill	The chains of Saint Peter; relics attributed to the Seven Maccabean Brothers, figures from the Old Testament venerated as martyrs
7	03.11	Tue	St. Anastasia on the Palatine Hill	Saint Anastasia of Sirmium (d. 304); relics of the Holy Mantle of Saint Joseph; part of the Veil of the Virgin Mary

8	03.12	Wed	St. Mary Major	<p>The Sacred Wood of the Cradle (the manger of the Christ Child); Panniculum (a small piece of cloth, part of the swaddling clothes with which the newborn Jesus was wrapped); Saint Matthew, Apostle (d. 70 or 74); Saint Jerome (d. 420); Saint Pius V, Pope (d. 1572)</p>
9	03.13	Thurs	St. Lawrence in Panisperna	<p>Site of the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence (d. 258); Saint Lawrence, martyr; Saint Crispina, martyr (d. 304); Saint Bridget of Sweden (d. 1373)</p>
10	03.14	Fri	Twelve Holy Apostles at the Trajan Forum	<p>Saint Philip the Apostle (d. 80); Saint James the Less, the Apostle (d. 62); Saints Chrysanthus and Daria, martyrs (d. c. 283)</p>

11	03.15	Sat	<p>St. Peter in the Vatican</p>	<p>Saint Peter (d. 67); Saint Linus (d. 76); Saint Cletus (d. 92); Saint Evaristus (d. 105); Saint Alexander I (d. 115); Saint Sixtus I (d. 126–128); Saint Telesphorus (d. 136); Saint Hyginus (d. 140); Saint Pius I (d. 155); Saint Anicetus (d. 166); Saint Eleutherius (d. 189); Saint Victor I (d. 199); Saint John Chrysostom (d. 407, relics in the Choir Chapel); Saint Leo I, the Great (d. 461); Saint Simplicius (d. 483); Saint Gelasius I (d. 496); Saint Symmachus (d. 514); Saint Hormisdas (d. 523); Saint John I (d. 526); Saint Felix IV (d. 530); Saint Agapetus I (d. 536); Saint Gregory I, the Great (d. 604); Saint Boniface IV (d. 615); Saint Eugene I (d. 657); Saint Vitalian (d. 672); Saint Agatho (d. 681); Saint Leo II (d. 683); Saint Benedict II (d. 685); Saint Sergius I (d. 701); Saint Gregory II (d. 731); Saint Gregory III (d. 741); Saint Zachary (d. 752); Saint Paul I (d. 767); Saint Leo III (d. 816); Saint Paschal I (d. 824); Saint Leo IV (d. 855); Saint Nicholas I (d. 867); Saint Leo IX (d. 1054); Blessed Urban II (d. 1099); Blessed Innocent XI (d. 1689); Saint Pius X (d. 1914); Saint John XXIII (d. 1963); Saint Paul VI (d. 1978); Blessed John Paul I (d. 1978); Saint John Paul II (d. 2005); a fragment of Saint Andrew's Cross; the lance of Saint Longinus; a fragment of the Cross of Christ</p>
12	03.16	Sun	<p>St. Mary in Domnica at Navicella</p>	<p>Saint Lawrence, martyr (d. 258); Saint Ciriaca, martyr</p>

13	03.17	Mon	St. Clement in Lateran	Saint Clement I , Pope and martyr (d. 101); Saint Ignatius of Antioch , Bishop and martyr (d. c. 110); Saint Cyril (d. 869), Apostle of the Slavs
14	03.18	Tue	St. Balbina on the Aventine	Saint Balbina , Virgin and Roman martyr (d. 130) already venerated in early Christian times Saints Felicissimus and Quirinus (her father) associated with the martyrdom of St. Balbina
15	03.19	Wed	St. Cecilia in Trastevere	Saint Cecilia (d. 230); Saint Valerian, Cecilia's husband, converted to Christianity and martyred (d. 229); Saint Tiburtius, brother of Valerian and companion in martyrdom; Saint Maximus, the soldier or official in charge of the execution of Valerian and Tiburtius, who later converted and was in turn martyred; Pope Urban I (c. d. 230), who is said to have baptised Cecilia and her husband Valerian
16	03.20	Thurs	St. Mary in Trastevere	Saint Julius I , Pope (d. 352); Saint Callixtus I , Pope and martyr (c. d. 222); Saints Florentinus, Corona, Sabinus and Alexander, martyrs
17	03.21	Fri	St. Vitalis in Fovea	Saints Vitalis (d. 304), Valeria (2nd century), Gervasius and Protasius (2nd century)
18	03.22	Sat	Sts. Peter and Marcellinus in Lateran	Saints Marcellinus and Peter , martyrs (d. 304); Saint Marcia, martyr associated with Saints Marcellinus and Peter

19	03.23	Sun	St. Lawrence Outside the Walls	Saint Lawrence (d. 258); Saint Stephen , Protomartyr (1st century); Saint Hippolytus (3rd century); Saint Justus , martyr (d. 167); Pope Saint Sixtus III (d. 440); Pope Saint Zosimus (d. 418); Blessed Pius IX , Pope (d. 1878)
20	03.24	Mon	St. Mark on the Capitoline	Saint Mark, Evangelist and martyr (1st century); Pope Saint Mark (d. 336); Saints Abdon and Sennen , Persian martyrs (3rd century)
21	03.25	Tue	St. Pudenziana at the Viminal	Saint Pudenziana , martyr (2nd century); Saint Praxedes , his sister (2nd century)
22	03.26	Wed	St. Sixtus (Sts. Nereus and Achilleus)	Saint Sixtus I , Pope (d. 125); Saints Nereus and Achilleus (d. 300); Saint Flavia Domitilla , martyr (1st century)
23	03.27	Thurs	Sts. Cosmas and Damian on the Via Sacra	Saints Cosmas and Damian , physicians and martyrs (d. 303); Saints Antimo and Leonzio, brothers and martyrs
24	03.28	Fri	St. Lawrence in Lucina	The gridiron of Saint Lawrence on which the Saint is said to have been burned alive; a vase containing St. Lawrence's burnt flesh
25	03.29	Sat	St. Susanna at the Baths of Diocletian	Saint Susanna , virgin and martyr (d. 294)
26	03.30	Sun	Holy Cross in Jerusalem	Fragments of the True Cross, part of the Titulus Crucis (the inscription "I.N.R.I."); nails from the Crucifixion and some thorns from the Crown; a fragment of the cross of the Good Thief, Saint Dismas ; the phalanx of Saint Thomas the Apostle (1st century)

27	04.31	Mon	Sts. Four Crowned on the Caelian Hill	Saints Castor , Sinfroniano , Claudius and Nicostratus , martyrs (4th century)
28	04.01	Tue	St. Lawrence in Damaso	Saint Lawrence , martyr (d. 258); Saint Damasus , Pope and martyr (d. 384); Saints Jovinus and Faustinus, martyrs
29	04.02	Wed	St. Paul Outside the Walls	Saint Paul the Apostle (d. 67); the chain of Saint Paul; the staff of Saint Paul
30	04.03	Thurs	Sts. Sylvester and Martin on the Mountains	Saints Artemius, Paulina and Sisinnius, martyrs; Blessed Angelus Paoli (d. 1720)
31	04.04	Fri	St. Eusebius on the Esquiline Hill	Saint Eusebius , presbyter and martyr (d. 353); Saints Orosius and Paulinus, priests and martyrs
32	04.05	Sat	St. Nicholas in Prison	Saint Nicholas of Bari (d. 270); Saints Marcellinus and Faustinus, martyrs (d. 250)
33	04.06	Sun	St. Peter in the Vatican	
34	04.07	Mon	St. Chrysogonus in Trastevere	Saint Chrysogonus , martyr (d. 303); Saint Anastasia , martyr (d. 250); Saint Rufus, martyr (1st century); Blessed Anna Maria Taigi (d. 1837)
35	04.08	Tue	St. Mary on Via Lata	Saint Agapitus , martyr (d. 273); Saints Hippolytus and Darius , martyrs (4th century); a fragment of the True Cross
36	04.09	Wed	St. Marcellus on the Corso	Saint Marcellus I , Pope (d. 309); Saint Digna and Saint Emerita, martyrs
37	04.10	Thurs	St. Apollinaris in Campo Marzio	Saint Apollinaris (2nd century); Saints Eustratius, Bardarius, Eugenius, Orestes and Eusenio, martyrs

38	04.11	Fri	St. Stephen on the Caelian Hill	Saint Stephen , Protomartyr (d. 36); Saints Primus and Felician , martyrs (d. 303); fragments of the True Cross
39	04.12	Sat	St. John at the Latin Gate	Bone fragments or small reliquaries containing parts of the body or personal objects attributed to Saint John the Evangelist (d. 98); Saints Gordianus and Epimachus , martyrs (4th century)
40	04.13	Sun	St. John Lateran	
41	04.14	Mon	St. Praxedes on the Esquiline	Saint Praxedes , martyr (2nd century); Saint Pudens, martyr (2nd century); Saint Victoria, martyr (d. 253); the Column of the Flagellation
42	04.15	Tue	St. Prisca on the Aventine	Saint Prisca , one of the first Christian martyrs (1st century); Saints Aquila and Priscilla , Christian spouses; fragments of the True Cross
43	04.16	Wed	St. Mary Major	
44	04.17	Thurs	St. John Lateran	
45	04.18	Fri	Holy Cross in Jerusalem	
46	04.19	Sat	St. John Lateran	
47	04.20	Sun	St. Mary Major	
48	04.21	Mon	St. Peter in the Vatican	
49	04.22	Tue	St. Paul Outside the Walls	

50	04.23	Wed	St. Lawrence Outside the Walls	Saint Lawrence , martyr (d. 258); Saint Stephen , Protomartyr (d. 36); Saint Sebastian , martyr (d. 288); Saint Francis of Assisi (d. 1226); Pope Saint Zosimus (d. 418), Pope Saint Sixtus III (d. 440), Pope Saint Hilary (d. 468), Pope Saint Damasus II (d. 1048); Blessed Pius IX , Pope (d. 1878); fragments of the True Cross
51	04.24	Thurs	Church of the Twelve Apostles	Saint Philip the Apostle (d. 80); Saint James the Less (d. 62)
52	04.25	Fri	St. Mary ad Martyres (Pantheon)	Saint Longinus , the Roman soldier who pierced the side of Jesus Christ during the Crucifixion (1st century); Saint Bibiana , martyr (d. 362–363); Saint Lucia , martyr (d. 304); Saints Rasus and Anastasius, martyrs; during the consecration of the church in 609 A.D. by Pope Boniface IV, the bones of at least 28 groups of martyrs were transferred here from the Roman cemeteries
53	04.26	Sat	St. John Lateran	
54	04.27	Sun	St. Pancras	Saint Pancras , martyr (d. 304); fragments of the True Cross